

VZCZCXRO2625
PP RUEHIK
DE RUEHSF #0167/01 0320718
ZNR UUUUU ZZH
P 010718Z FEB 06
FM AMEMBASSY SOFIA
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 1351
INFO RUEHZG/NATO EU COLLECTIVE PRIORITY
RUEKJCS/JOINT STAFF WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY
RUEPGDA/USEUCOM JIC VAIHINGEN GE PRIORITY

UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 03 SOFIA 000167

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STATE FOR PM/SNA, EUR/NB, PM/B
DEFENSE FOR OSD/PA&E, OASD/PA&E, OASD/ISA/EUR, OASD/ISA/NP,
OASD/ISA/AP, OASD/ISA/NESA, OASD/ISA/BTF

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [MCAP](#) [NATO](#) [PREL](#) [BU](#)

SUBJECT: BULGARIA 2005/2006 ALLIED CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE
COMMON DEFENSE

REF: 05 STATE 223383

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11. (U) General Assessment. Since joining NATO in April 2004, Bulgaria has maintained its defense spending at 2.6% of GDP and made substantial troop contributions to overseas missions. Following national elections in June 2005, the incumbent National Movement for Simeon the Second (NMSS) was forced to share power in a multi-party coalition led by the Bulgarian Socialist Party (BSP). Despite the change in government, the BSP-led coalition has maintained Bulgaria's support for troop contributions to NATO and non-NATO missions.

ISAF: The current Bulgarian contingent consists of 74 military personnel. In August 2006, Bulgarian forces will assume operational responsibility for Kabul International Airport bringing their total contribution to approximately 150 soldiers. In addition, Bulgarian Brigadier General Neyko Nenov will lead a 140-soldier contingent from the South-Eastern Europe Brigade (SEEBRIG) on a six-month deployment to Afghanistan beginning in early 2006. The SEEBRIG unit will include 30 Bulgarian soldiers.

KFOR: One infantry company (approximately 50 soldiers) has been assigned to KFOR since February 2000.

NTM-I: Two officers participate as instructors.

EUFOR: One engineering platoon (approximately 35 soldiers) has been assigned to EUFOR, previously SFOR, since July 1997.

Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF): Bulgaria maintained a 480-man battalion in Iraq from August 2003 to December 2005. During this period, the contingent suffered 13 killed and 80 wounded. In addition, six Bulgarian contract personnel were killed during this period.

12. (U) Important Developments. Following a May 2005 decision in Parliament to withdraw its troops from Iraq by year's end, the battalion in Iraq returned to Bulgaria in January 2006. Parliament's decision also expressed Bulgaria's intention to remain a Coalition member, and the government is poised to approve a new, smaller mission in Iraq in 2006.

13. (U) The cornerstone of Bulgaria's military modernization and reform effort is the Strategic Defense Review (SDR) which the MOD and General Staff completed in 2004. The SDR is based on the premise that Bulgaria faces new asymmetrical security threats rather than traditional threats to its

national territory. In 2004, Parliament approved the SDR and the associated Long-Term Plan for the Development of the Armed Forces up to 2105 (Plan 2015). Together they provide a vision and a multi-year plan for developing improved NATO standardization and interoperability, essential for alliance operations abroad, within an annual defense budget of roughly \$700 million. Bulgaria is deactivating unnecessary units optimized for the defense of national territory, reducing personnel strength from 45,000 to 39,000, and establishing a joint operations command to deal with internal and external military operations. The SDR also stresses the need for lighter units and special operations forces. It identifies eleven priority equipment modernization projects:

- New Ground Vehicles
- New Helicopters
- New Multi-Role Fighters
- New Corvettes
- New Transport Aircraft
- Coastal Radiolocation System
- Purchase and Modernization of Used Warships
- Personal Equipment for Soldiers
- Communication and Information Capabilities
- Destruction of Excess Ammunition
- Nuclear, Biological, and Chemical Detection Equipment

In the fall of 2005, the GOB approved purchases for three of the eleven projects:

- New helicopters from Eurocopter
- New ground transportation vehicles from Daimler-Chrysler
- New transport aircraft from Alenia Tactical Transportation Systems

Progress on these three projects marks the first steps in a series of procurements to achieve the SDR's equipment modernization goals.

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¶4. (U) As part of the SDR, Bulgaria is undertaking a multi-year effort to professionalize the armed forces, improve English language skills, and develop a core of career non-commissioned officers with the technical knowledge and leadership skills to take on many of the functions that have been performed by commissioned officers in the past. Bulgaria is also striving to reform its acquisition system, improve logistics and personnel management systems, and modernize its command and control architecture. These shifts in organizational culture are as important as equipment modernization programs to make Bulgaria an even more effective military ally.

¶5. (U) In May 2005, a U.S. interagency team began negotiations with the GOB on the use of several existing Bulgarian military facilities by U.S. forces as part of the Global Defense Posture Review. These ongoing negotiations are focused on developing a combined supplemental status of forces agreement and defense cooperation agreement that would allow the U.S. to use the Novo Selo training area, Bezmer Airfield, and possibly Graf Ignatievo Airfield. If an agreement is signed on these shared military facilities, enhanced military-to-military relationships and additional bilateral training exercises would further support Bulgarian military's SDR reform goals. It would also provide U.S. forces with rotational training opportunities in Bulgaria.

¶6. (U) Political/Economic Factors Affecting Defense Capabilities. The primary obstacle to enhancing Bulgaria's defense capabilities is financial. The average Bulgarian earns approximately \$200 per month, and the government is struggling to improve social services and raise the standard of living. This, combined with significant reconstruction costs from severe flooding in 2005, has strained the national budget. Sustaining Bulgaria's overseas deployments, including the battalion in Iraq, cost \$33 million in 2004 and

\$75 million in 2005. The expenses for participation in OIF were not planned in the 2003 and 2004 defense budgets and were taken out of funds originally intended for training and modernization. This led to some delays in implementing NATO force goals. Despite the financial challenges, Bulgaria has maintained defense spending at 2.6% of GDP for 2006. Bulgaria continues to work on developing their NATO niche capabilities: military police, engineering, NBC, and field medical services. The military police have recently acquired new vehicles and security equipment, and they are scheduled to receive new night vision devices and thermal imaging equipment.

¶7. (U) Military Assistance. Bulgaria has made three separate donations of arms and ammunition to the Afghan National Army worth approximately \$5 million.

¶8. (U) Peacekeeping and Humanitarian Relief Operations. At the Madrid international donor conference, Bulgaria pledged \$1 million in in-kind humanitarian support to Iraq. In December 2003, Bulgaria delivered humanitarian supplies worth \$500,000. In July 2004, it delivered medicine and medical supplies worth \$30,000. Bulgaria plans to provide the rest of the in-kind support by training Iraqi police forces in Bulgaria and providing scholarships for 20 Iraqi students to attend master's degree programs in Bulgaria beginning in ¶2006. In Afghanistan ten medics are stationed at a hospital in Herat as part of the Spanish-led provincial reconstruction team. Bulgaria donated 59 tons of power cables to the Afghan electric power sector worth \$145,000. Following the earthquake in northern Pakistan in October 2005, Bulgaria contributed one plane-load of tents and blankets.

¶9. (U) Counter Proliferation Contributions. Bulgaria is a member of every major international regime for the control of arms, dual-use technology, and weapons of mass destruction including the MTCR, NPT, CBW, Australia Group, NSG, and the Wassenaar Arrangement. Bulgaria works closely with the U.S. on issues of export control and nonproliferation.

¶10. (U) Direct Cost Sharing. Not applicable. There are no U.S. forces stationed in Bulgaria.

¶11. (U) Indirect Cost Sharing. Not applicable. There are no U.S. forces stationed in Bulgaria.

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